

When they ask for bread, we are giving them stone.

Let us, then, seek to find the true ends to be accomplished by the Sunday school. Let us set our ideals high and consider it unfortunate if we do not attain to those ends.

LESSON FOR JULY 16

BY THE EDITOR

The Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace. Dan. 3: 14-28.

Golden Text. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.—Dan 3: 17

Lesson Thought. God will deliver and protect those who trust and serve him.

Home Readings

The golden image. Dan. 3: 1-7.

Hebrews in the fiery furnace. Dan. 3: 8-30.

God's presence in trouble. Isa. 43: 1-7.

An Almighty helper. Isa. 41: 8-16.

Patience in suffering. I Pet. 4: 12-19.

The Lord's angel. Acts 12: 1-11.

Introduction

About three or four years after the time of our last lesson, Daniel interpreted the king's dream, and because of his superior wisdom, Nebuchadnezzar promoted him to the chief place in his kingdom, that is, made him ruler of the province of Babylon and governor over its wise men. The three companions of Daniel were also advanced. A few years after this Nebuchadnezzar, to celebrate his victories, set up a golden image in the plain of Dura. It was a colossal affair, and when completed, all the officers in the kingdom were invited to the dedication. The king issued a command that all the people should worship the golden image which he had set up. The penalty for refusing to obey this order was to be cast into the fiery furnace. When the time came Daniel's three friends refused to worship, and complaint was made to the king, who in his rage had them brought before him, and offered them an opportunity to obey the order, but if they refused, they would be cast into the furnace. Then follows the lesson of to day.

The Lesson Applied

1. *A lesson for the young.* The names of the three persons here mentioned were young men, and young men in peculiar circumstances. They were far away from home, away from the influences and restraints of the sanctuary and the instructions of pious fathers and mothers. They were exposed to very strong temptations. But these young men were well grounded in the faith and they furnish examples of heroic devotion which all young people of the land should carefully study. When it came to the question of right and duty with the fiery furnace, and acquiescence with the life of the heathen with promotion in a heathen court, they deliberately chose the furnace. It was a matter of conviction with them. They committed themselves entirely into the hands of God. Whatever he would do, that would be right with them. We need such devotion now.

2. *A comprehensive creed.* These young

men professed their creed before the king, and tho a very brief one, it was nevertheless a comprehensive one. "Our God," was the whole of the creed. In him they trusted. He was their Father and they were his children. They had no need to concern themselves about their own safety, God was taking care of them. It is our business to trust in the Lord, to do his will, to follow him in all things, he will take care of the rest. It is not necessary that we should know whether he will deliver us or not; he may and he may not. That is left to God who knows what is best. The important thing for each one of us is to know that we are in God's hands, that we belong to him, that we are his, and he is ours. There may be personal safety or there may not. That does not matter with the trustful child. Do the Lord's will and let him take care of the consequences.

3. *Whom we serve.* This was the practical part of the creed. They believed God, and to show that they really did believe in him, they gave him their service. Service is the practical part of our Christianity. To confess our faith, to acknowledge God as our Father, to sing songs of praise, to offer up prayers, this is worship, but not service. Service is what we do for humanity as a result of our faith in God.

4. *He is able.* They did not say that God *would* deliver them, but they did say that God *can* deliver them; they did not know whether he would or not, but they knew he *could* and that was enough for faith. He is our Father, he loves us, he cares for us, he is able to deliver us from any fiery furnace. We should be willing therefore to trust him, for if it seems best to deliver us from the hands of the enemy he will do so. And if he does not deliver us, we may be sure that it was best that we should not be delivered.

The Lesson Illustrated

The result of youthful fidelity. The explanation of the courage of these young men is found in their youthful fidelity, as shown in last week's lesson. The boy is the father of the man. Behind this superb courage in manhood lay years of training in righteousness. There is a spiritual momentum from fixed habits of life which carries men thru crises like this. When Daniel was tested he prayed before his open window "as he did aforetime." That phrase explains it. The gathered impetus of a holy life thrust aside the king's edict, as the tide sweeps away the child's sand fort. Put speed enough behind a tallow candle, and you can send it thru a plank. Strengthen the weakest saint by fixed habits of life, and he will go safely thru many a terrible temptation.—*Monday Club.*

All Christian history has been moved by this glorious picture. When Peter and John faced the Sanhedrin with the declaration, "We must obey God rather than men," were they not mindful of this scene? Dean Stanley well says: "How often have these

words confirmed the solitary protest not only in the Roman amphitheater, but in the more ordinary, yet not more easy, task of maintaining the rights of conscience against arbitrary power or invidious insult! How many an independent patriot or unpopular reformer has been nerved by them to resist the unreasonable demands of priest or king!" We recall Thomas Hughes's picture of the boy Arthur Stanley saying his prayers in the dormitory at Rugby amid the jeers of the heedless boys. And that talk over the Bible reading in Tom Brown's study, when the impetuous Tom, scorning Naaman's compromise with his conscience, turns to this passage and cries, "Look here; this is what makes my blood tingle!" Ah, yes, Tom Brown, it makes us all tingle with a new sense of the grandeur of faith. I doubt if any Christian martyr ever went to the stake without the strengthening memory of these heroes.—*E. M. Noyes.*

Two ways of deliverance. How different to the eye of sense the dealings of God with some of his servants from his dealings with others! The three Hebrews are brought forth unscathed from the fiery furnace; the Maccabean martyrs perish in the flames. Peter is delivered from the sword of Herod; from that sword which has just been stained with James's blood. The malice of an emperor fails to hurt one John, and he is plunged unharmed into the boiling oil; another John has his life given away at a wanton dancing girl's request. Shall we say that God delivered those and did not deliver these? Should we not rather say that those were delivered openly—these as really delivered?—*Trench.*

There are fiery furnaces of sorrow and trial for us every day. As a Christian you may be put into one this very week by a test of principle, when you are tempted to obey some other voice than that of your conscience and your God. O may we, like these true servants of God, say, "He whom we serve can deliver us if he will, but if not, we will still serve and trust him!" We may go into the furnace "bound"—unable to help ourselves: perhaps bound by habits or infirmities which need the fire to burn them away. And we may walk thru it "loose," with a free and triumphant soul. We shall have sweet companionship there, for Jesus will keep his promise to be with us; companionship sweeter than we should ever have known had we not gone into the fire with him. He will take such care of us that not the smallest hurt can come upon us, for "even the very hairs of our head are numbered." Because we trust him; trust, when everything is dark and threatening; trust so fully that personal ease and safety count for nothing in comparison with integrity of soul—this is the sort of Christian living which brings men to God. Let the world see that "no other God can deliver after this sort," from sin, self, and weakness, making us noble and loyal to principle, victorious over all circumstances however trying, and like this